

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 17.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1889.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

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CHAPTER IV. BALM IN GILEAD.

BEFORE we left Mrs. Mogeridge, Bobby was fairly comforted. A sob now and then shook his pinafore, but, having explained away late events to his satisfaction, Bobby searched for the three-legged stool, set it right end uppermost and himself on the top of it, and surveyed us all calmly.

"Mammy had been c'ying and c'ying because it wasn't Bobby's own pretty solgers; and Bobby had been c'ying and c'ying too. . . ."

So far so good. Then, with a sudden remembrance of the bitterness of his own disappointment:

"They was narsty solgers; there was no gee-gees, and no Capteens, and no—noffin'!"

This last word came in after a queer look at Aunt Dacie, who screwed her mouth up, and shook her head. It was dawning upon Bobby that certain mysterious reasons existed why "Daddy" should not be alluded to lightly. He drew a deep sigh, as one who had escaped a danger only by the skin of his teeth, and, bending forward, smiled into Aunt Dacie's face.

"Bobby is better now," he said, "and Mammy is better too; and the narsty solgers do be gone away."

There could be no sort of doubt as to "Mammy" being better: better, indeed, than she had been since those terrible days whose cruel bitterness had dried up the fountain of her tears, and turned her heart to stone. She, too, sobbed now and

again, but spoke quite quietly and contentedly to Mazie as they sat side by side on the old settle. She seemed to feel some element of comfort in my darling's nearness; for she held the end of the long, soft, brown fur that hung about her slender throat, and kept stroking it gently as she talked.

I had good news for Bessy, and gave it gladly. The prison authorities had agreed to give her regular work as soon as she should be fit to enter upon new duties.

"I am quite fit now, sir," she said, rising, and flushing with pleasure and surprise. "I shall be a different woman after this. Crying is always good for a woman when her heart is too full to hold; and then, sir, there's Bobby to think of," with a glance at the urchin on the stool.

"Yes, there's me," put in Bobby, evidently feeling that his existence was a thing for us all to congratulate ourselves upon. Which indeed it was.

He was a bad, bold boy, was Bobby, and always in some mischief or other; still, what would Bessy have done without him in these darksome days?

"I'm afraid I've been wilful in my sorrow, sir," continued Bessy, wiping her eyes, wherein the tears still rose readily, "but I won't be so no more. It's been terrible hard, sir; and them as is about one makes it harder still. The people here know my story, and them sort 'll throw a thing at you when they've got it handy like. Even in the street I've heard folk say, a-following me wi' their eyes: 'That's the woman whose husband—'"

She stopped, and made a forlorn gesture, while Aunt Dacie gave a horrified glance at Bobby. But Bessy was too terribly in earnest to think of Bobby. She soon recovered voice, and went on quietly

enough, holding Mazie's little hand, which had stolen into hers, close and fast.

"I shan't be afraid, sir, to go about your place—the prison I mean—after work. They don't think so much of them sort of things there, naturally being, as you may say, used to them like."

Aunt Dacie's face was a study. To hear Bessy speak you would have thought we were in the habit of hanging half-a-dozen or so of our prisoners every morning, as they used to do in the "good old times." I saw a smile just touch the corner of Mazie's lips as she turned her head aside. Bessy's simple faith in her own view of things, and Aunt Dacie's horror and amaze, made a droll enough picture. The humorous ever trips at the heels of the tragic.

We three were soon sauntering slowly down the street, for I thought I might give myself the indulgence of setting the two ladies on their way homewards.

We passed the prison, dark and gloomy, with great gates closed; and George Bramwell, who saluted me, looking through the wicket.

"How is old David?" said Aunt Dacie, "we often speak of him."

Which shows that my interests had become theirs, as well as theirs mine.

"He is very comfortable just now," I answered. Then I stopped and hesitated a moment. "You do not often come so far as this, Miss Birt. It would be a great happiness to him to see you and Miss Margaret."

They were delighted at the idea; at least Aunt Dacie said she was, and Mazie looked so.

Mazie was strangely silent altogether this morning, and I could see had been deeply impressed with the scene at poor Bessy's.

George was happy to be allowed to usher in such distinguished visitors to his father; and, as to old David himself, you would have thought he would have shaken Aunt Dacie's hand off. He was more timid with Mazie, holding her soft, white fingers gingerly, and smiling at the contrast they showed against his gnarled and veined old hands.

There was a sharp look in his twinkling grey eyes as he glanced from Mazie to me, and back again, that made me feel rather flurried. You could never count upon David in the matter of what he might say, and we all knew—at least all those of us whose calling takes them much among the

sick and dying, that a strange intuition and clearness of perception is often given to those who are nearing death. I was glad when Aunt Dacie claimed his attention.

"Do you weary, lying here all the day?" she said, in her gentle, tender way.

David gave an upward glance at the ceiling, a look all round the walls of the little gate-house room.

"One would be hard put to't, ma'm, to get weary wi' such a mort o' foiner picters to look at. My son George, he papered this here, and I count there ain't such another sight—in the way of a wall-paper—nowheres, be where may the other. There's allus something new to be searched out among the lot; and, as for t' reading on t' ceiling, if a body only could get near enough to see it, he'd never want for knowledge of the times when them papers was wrote."

We all looked up, we all looked round. There they were—plain pictures, coloured pictures, pictures of all shapes and sizes, from all manner of illustrated papers. A Cardinal, in glorious flowing scarlet robes, found himself cheek by jowl with a pictured Punch and Judy show. Over the mantel-shelf was a lithograph of the Queen, and all round about her were little posies of brightly-coloured flowers, taken—so David told us—from a nurseryman's catalogue. Every inch of the walls was covered with something or another in the pictorial line, and all were old friends to David; though the Cardinal—whom he called a "fine chap, and no mistake," and "the Queen, Heaven bless her!" with her surrounding of fair flowers—were his favourites.

"It's my son George as did 'em every one," he said again; and there stood George, with all an artist's mingled pride and shyness, twisting his cap in his hands, and muttering that it "wasn't worth makin' a fuss over, when all was said and done;" but evidently feeling all the while that our praise was not ill-bestowed.

"There's a sight of information up there," he said, with a jerk of his thumb towards the ceiling, which was entirely covered with letter-press.

"Ay, ay," chuckled the old man. "If the flies as settle there so thick i' summer could bo' read, their heads 'ud be fair brasted wi' all the larnin' they'd get."

There was no contradicting this assertion, to which Aunt Dacie assented with a solemn air that was sufficiently amusing. The quaint, rough ring of David's North-

country tongue—never quite lost during his long years of London life—puzzled her, I could see.

"And now, George," went on the old man, "before they leave us, I reckon the ladies would like to see Joseph Stubbs."

Between the wall and David's bed was a narrow space, and in this space an old arm-chair, cushioned with a shabby shawl folded thickly. Upon this shawl might be seen a great bunch of tawny fur, wrapped round with a tawny tail. Sometimes two great green eyes looked at you from out the shadow.

"Joseph won't do—nor Stubbs won't do. He must have the whole thing right and straight, or there isn't a stir out of him—is there, George?" said David.

George shook his head.

"Please, sir, to try him—just for the ladies to see for theirsens. He's naught bo' a cat, bo' he has his ways, same as a Christian."

So we called "Joseph," and we called "Stubbs." Aunt Dacie even went so far as to try the familiar and enticing "Joe."

But the tawny cat never moved. Then, in my best clerical voice, I addressed him:

"Joseph Stubbs, come and be polite to the ladies."

With a mighty stretch, and arching of a long, tawny back, the creature rose in his lair, stepped delicately across the counterpane, and rubbed his sleek head against Mazie's arm.

"Ay, bo' he has sense, has Joseph Stubbs," said the old man, in high delight. "He's full o' notions, and they're gradely ones too, is Joseph Stubbs. What friends they be, surely, all in a moment like! Bean't he a cute 'un now, sir, bean't he just?"

Again I fancied some hidden significance in old David's look and words, and I was not sorry when Joseph Stubbs retreated once more to his arm-chair, and folded himself up to sleep.

"You see, marm," said David to Aunt Dacie, who was deeply interested in the cat, "when my missis wur alive, hoo lay that side o' t' bed, and hoo had bad nights. Times and times as hoo couldna' sleep; and Joseph Stubbs and her grew company for each other. Hoo used to talk to 'un wonderful, and 'un to her. I've woke many a time and heern them at it. He comforted her wonderful, did Joseph Stubbs; and when she died, sir, he fretted

same as a Christian, and more than most. He'll fret after me when my time comes; but not same as he did after Mary—tain't in natur he should."

"How did he come by such an odd name?" said Aunt Dacie, who was seated in great state by the fireside in the "best chair"—a relic of David's native North-country village.

As Miss Birt spoke, David eyed her with a certain dignity.

"He was allers called Joseph Stubbs, was that there cat, marm. No one never knowed him to be aught else."

David was evidently aggrieved at what he saw fit to consider an indiscreet question on the part of Aunt Dacie, but he soon recovered himself in the delights of a glib account of the cat's many gifts.

"He knows the sound of Her Majesty's carriage, sir, same as yo' might; an' he goes out along of my son George, and looks grave like at them as gets a ride in it for nothin'. He stands by t' big gate wi' 's tale straight oop, and he looks at t' bad 'uns like as if he'd say, 'Yo'd ought'er be ashamed of you'sens, so yo' ought, every one of yo'.' His ears is tore to rags wi' foighten, fur he conna abide the sight of another cat anywheres—he loikes to have the wuld to himsen', does Joseph Stubbs. He has his ways, sir, same as a Christian."

The typical Christian, whose ways were as those of Joseph Stubbs, seemed to puzzle Aunt Dacie not a little.

"I've heard a moighty lot about yo' all from t' minister here," said old David, as we were taking leave of him, "and can't feel strange-like to ony one of ye; and I'm right fain yo've steppit in to see me so friendly and comfu'ble. I'm sorry t' little wench bean't here for to show yo' her bonnie face and the pretty curls on her yed. I reckon yo've heard on her, ony-way——"

"Oh yes! Oh yes!" they said, eagerly. "Mr. Draycott has spoken of her over and over again——"

He heard this with a pleased smile, and then my darling, following Miss Dacie, held out her hand to him, and he, looking keenly and questioningly, as it seemed to me, at the sweet face bending over him, with a gentle daring took her other hand as well, and so held them.

"Heaven bless yo', my dear," he said, solemnly, "and all them as loves yo'——"

I saw a quiver pass across the face I loved; and then, in a moment, Mazie had knelt beside the bed, and was speaking:

"May Heaven bless you, too, and make your bed in your sickness. I shall think of you, and keep you in my prayers. I shall not forget."

The old man seemed too much touched for any more words to come easy. I saw the shimmer of tears in the sunken eyes that shone beneath the grey, pent-house brows, the tremble round the pallid lips.

It had struck to my heart to hear Mazie speak like that. I had realised of late how the girl was fast becoming the woman; that all the latent earnestness of a character capable of peculiar intensity of aspiration and feeling, was developing with rapid strides. I had dared to whisper to my own heart the name of the magician whose touch was working this beautiful change; but I had hardly felt the reality of these things. It had never been brought home to me until I saw that gracious head bowed by old David's bedside, and heard the words of faith and comfort uttered by the lips I loved.

As we turned out of the wicket, I saw Mazie look back at the looming mass of tall buildings behind—the prison that hid in its dark breast so many a tale of sin and sorrow, of blighted lives, and cruel memories.

"It looks very black and desolate, does it not?" I said, as she went on after Miss Dacie through the gateway.

"I do not think of it like that," she said, looking up at me with grave, trustful eyes. "I only think of your work in it—of the help, and the comfort, and the hope—and so it seems beautiful, not dark or gloomy any more. You have told us so much about it all, that we feel almost to have part and lot in it, somehow. I mean Aunt Dacie—and Dumphie—and—"

Oh, precious stammering tongue! Oh, priceless woman-heart, showing me in such sweet and artless fashion the depths of that beautiful sympathy and tenderness of thine that is as the light of my eyes, the "heart of my heart!"

Miss Dacie kept ahead of us. The truth was that dear Aunt Dacie had been, as I could well see, "upset." She had never heard the child of her love, the "little one" bequeathed to her care by the dying mother, speak as she had done to-day. Those who watch all the time see least. In her eyes Mazie was still a child; a creature to be cherished and protected, not a creature able to stand alone and give to others in like measure as God had given

to her, of sympathy, and help, and consolation. I could see that Aunt Dacie's lips were screwed up, her eyes rounder than usual. She was all ruffled, like a hen that, having hatched a duckling, sees it, one fine day, take to the water, and swim away across the pond.

Before we parted, Miss Dacie told me that Dumphie wanted to see me, to have a talk with me about something; what, she knew not.

"I am going to the City. I will look in at the 'curmudgeon's,' and ask McGregor to come and have tea with me, to-night."

At this Mazie laughed.

"It sounds so droll to hear you call my brother, McGregor. He is just Dumphie—only Dumphie, and Mr. Alison is not a 'curmudgeon' any more. Do you know he sent me a gold watch and chain—such a beauty—the other day; and he told Dumphie he would do anything for any of us, 'so long as we never go near him.'"

"There is no fear of that," said Miss Dacie, bridling. "We are none of us likely to go where we are not wanted, I should hope!"

I was soon on my solitary way City-wards; but the streets were still paved with gold, and the hoardings covered with all manner of advertisements, might have been trees of wondrous foliage and golden fruit, for the touch of a little hand lingered on my palm, and a sweet store of precious words were garnered in my heart. At Alison and Co.'s I had a glimpse of the "curmudgeon," in propria persona—a stout, red-faced man, like Hamlet, "scant of breath," with a fringe of grey hair all round his business-like head, and a huge gold seal dangling from his huge gold chain.

Having been told that Mr. McGregor was out, I had written a line, and just given it to a clerk when this apparition burst upon my view, and, alas! I on his. The warehouse of this worthy City firm was a palace of its kind; the room from which the senior partner issued, as I could see through the open door, a marvel of costly comfort.

The staircase that led from the basement, with its marble pillars, to the floor where endless counting-houses were ranged—all radiating, as it were, from the Central Sun, that of the Senior Partner—was as broad as that of some nobleman's mansion, and carpeted with velvet pile so thick that the foot sank in it as if it were so much moss. I was—foolishly—lingering, after having delivered my note, when Mr. Alison

appeared. Truth to tell, I was looking at the sumptuous surroundings, and trying to call up a vision of what Dumphie must have looked and felt like, as he mounted those stairs, and bearded the lion in his den. Quite cool, I could fancy, and wholly unawed by the signs of wealth around him. Resolute as one who leads a forlorn hope, panoplied and fortified by the thought of "the lads" at home, and what his errand meant to them.

"Is that—ahem—person asking his way anywhere?" said an irate voice just above me—the sound driving forth the ghost of the past, which I had been conjuring up so diligently.

"No, sir," answered a frightened-looking clerk, "it's only a note for Mr. McGregor."

"None of his relations—I hope?" was the gracious rejoinder.

"No, sir. Oh, dear no, sir! Merely a friend."

The glibness of the reply said volumes for the business capacities of that clerk, if it left his veracity doubtful.

My own business, as well as Dumphie's, completed, I betook myself homewards; and then and there an unpleasant train of thought set in.

What could it be that Dumphie "wanted to talk to me about"?

Was it possible that he—with a man's clearer perceptions—had read the story of my love for Mazie, while Aunt Dacie remained blind? Was he not "Papa Birt" to the rest—a sort of self-constituted head of the family? Besides, was not that dainty maiden, that fair unfolded flower, the very apple of his eye?

Dumphie never looked beyond the little household in Prospect Place for joy or sorrow. If things were well with them, then he was content; if things went ill, then must he put his broad shoulder to the wheel and smooth the troubles away. In this home Mazie was queen. All the rest, as it were, circled round her.

Had not Aunt Dacie told me the touching story of how the tiny, motherless baby—years and years ago—lay sleeping in her fair white cradle, with Dumphie gently touching the rockers, and the other lads squatted round, keeping guard over this new gift of Heaven?

Would he not be equally on guard now, watching over his darling's happiness? Were his eyes so true and so tender for nothing? Well—I need not fear his searching.

Of outward attractions I have small store to offer. Hazledean of Corpus did not exaggerate much when he drew that immortal portrait of "Old Draycott, ten years hence."

But, at heart, I am worthy of a woman's love; even though that woman be Margaret Birt. I can love truly, faithfully, entirely—these capabilities have developed in me of late, and made me very conscious of their presence—I can lay this heart of mine bare; I can promise a devotion to her happiness—equal to his own. Knowing Dumphie, I dare not say greater. I can tell him what her sympathy in my work will be to me—and to those among whom my work is cast. I can tell him that never, until now, have I understood the meaning of the word "helpmeet." I can tell him that he might easily light upon some younger, better-looking, more "taking" man than Louis Draycott for his sister's lover; but none who will love her more devotedly, cherish her more fondly, uphold her more tenderly through all the "changes and chances of this mortal life."

Is this, then, the thing that Dumphie wants to have a "talk" with me about?

What can it be else? Yet, stay. Surely no spectre from the terrible past can be raising its ghastly head to glare upon me now? No sinister and blighting rumour, no ugly tales of what is buried deep, deep down, can have reached the ears of those so far removed from all my past life? No. I will put the thought from me. The earth is battered down too hard and fast upon that cruel past for it to rise and confront me now.

And—for the wrong I did—have I not suffered?

THE MILD HINDU.

ACCORDING to the census of 1831, there were close upon one hundred and forty-five millions of our fellow-subjects in British India classed as Hindus. And, according to Dr. (now Sir) W. W. Hunter, these one hundred and forty-five millions are, in large part, directly, and the remainder indirectly, sprung from the same Aryan stock as ourselves. Ethnologically speaking, they are our brothers, and, politically speaking, they are components, with us, of the great British Empire. But in spite of this racial and national relationship, we in England do not pay much

attention to them, and we trouble ourselves very little to learn what manner of people they are. True, there are abundance of wise, and learned, and interesting—as well as dry, and dull, and statistical—books about India and her peoples. But these books are read only by the few, and the many at home are content to limit their interest in their Indian brothers to the amount of an annual subscription to some Indian Mission Fund.

Let us, however, endeavour to induce our readers to take a closer interest in this very wide and interesting subject. Let us ask them to go with us a little while to see "the mild Hindu" at home.

Sir William Hunter, the greatest living authority on the history and economics of India, tells us that the great mixed population now known as Hindus, grew out of a fusing of the Aryan and non-Aryan races, under the Brahmans, who stepped to the front upon the decay of Buddhism in the Peninsula.

There were several centuries of conflict between the two creeds; but the eighth century is taken as the turning-point, and the beginning of the triumph of Hinduism. Broadly, then, Hinduism is a social organisation and a religious confederacy some eleven centuries old, and numbering, as we have said, some hundred and forty-five millions of persons in the British dominions alone, without counting the independent and feudatory states of India. As a social organisation, it rests upon Caste; as a religious confederacy, it represents a combination of the Brahmanical faith with Buddhism, and the remains of even older rites.

It is not our purpose, however, to examine the character of the Vedas and the growth of the Eastern religions and castes, but to take a look at the people as they are to-day.

The spirit of Hinduism has been well described as in harmony with those well-known verses of Wordsworth, beginning, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," and it teaches, that even before a child is born into a world of ceremonies, certain ceremonies must be performed on its behalf. The astrologers are consulted by the anxious mother, who faithfully observes the instructions given as to diet, offerings to the gods, etc. But after the interesting event has happened, the poor mother is regarded as "unclean" for three weeks, if it be a boy, and for a month, if it be a girl, during which period she must

not enter her husband's house, but must dwell in a shed apart—a practice analogous to what has been noticed of some of the inhabitants of even Arctic climates.

Every Hindu mother desires a son, because sons are a source of strength and wealth, while daughters are a source of anxiety and expense. As one of their proverbs says: "Blind sons support their parents; but a prince's daughters extort money from them."

The ceremonial process, which begins before birth, continues until and after death. To describe the life of a Hindu—as Mr. W. J. Wilkins* says—is to describe the Hindu religion, for religion with him is not a thing for particular times and seasons, but regulates all the relations of his life. And as the religion of the Hindus has many phases, and varies in details of observance with locality, so do their customs and modes of life vary. What, then, we have to describe is not literally applicable to the whole of the communities of the one hundred and forty-five millions of Hindus; but the broad lines, we believe, will cover the majority of the population.

After the "mild Hindu" is born, his horoscope is prepared by an astrologer, who, on payment of a fee, forms a forecast of the child's fate—more or less elaborate according to the amount of the fee. The value of the horoscope in one sense need not be discussed, but its use in another may be pointed out. As there is no system of registration of births, these horoscopes are often produced and accepted in Law Courts as evidence of age.

Now, having got our "mild Hindu" into the world, let us see what manner of place he is to live in.

"The typical Hindu family house," Mr. Wilkins tells us, "is built in the form of a quadrangle, with an open courtyard in the centre. Opposite to the entrance-gate is a platform, built to receive the images that are made for the periodic religious festivals that are held in honour of the various deities. On the ground-floor, the rooms to right and left of the courtyard are used largely as store-rooms, offices, etc.; whilst over these are the public reception-rooms, well lighted, and generally well furnished, some of them having chairs, etc., for the convenience of European visitors. Here, also, is a room in which the family idol is

* "Modern Hinduism," by W. J. Wilkins (London: T. Fisher Unwin), an interesting work, from which we have drawn much material for the present article.

kept, before which the priest performs service generally twice a day. All these apartments are used by the male members of the family only. Excepting at feasts, the meals are not taken there, unless there may happen to be a number of visitors, not being members of the family, who are not admitted into the more private portion of the house. From the back of the courtyard, a passage conducts into a second and smaller yard, which is also surrounded by rooms, in which the lady members of the family live. Here the meals are eaten, and here the sleeping apartments of the family are to be found. The guests sleep in the rooms adjoining the outer courtyard. These inner rooms are generally much smaller than those in the more public part of the house; and the windows are also smaller, and placed high in the walls—for Manu distinctly declared that it was not right for a woman to look out of the windows. During the day the men generally occupy the more public rooms, as they may be transacting business, or amusing themselves in various ways, whilst the women are engaged in household duties, or in their own forms of recreation. As it is considered indecorous for a man to speak to his wife during the day, their only time for conversation is when they retire to their own apartment for the night."

This is a fair description of the dwelling of a well-to-do Hindu; but, of course, the dwellings of the ryots, or peasants, are much more humble. In a book about "Bengal Peasant Life," by Mr. Day, we have the following description of a ryot's house:

"You enter the house, with your face to the east, through a small door of mango-wood in the street, and you go at once to the 'uthān,' or open yard, which is indispensable to the house of every peasant in the country. On the west side of the yard, on the same side as the gate, stands the 'bara ghar,' or big hut. This is the biggest, the neatest, and most elaborately finished of all Badan's huts. Its walls, which are of mud, are of great thickness; the thatch, which is of the straw of paddy, is more than a cubit deep; the bamboo framework, on which the thatch is laid, is well compacted together, every interstice being filled with the long and slender reed called *sārā*, alternating with another of red colour; the middle beam, which supports the thatch, though it is not made of the costly teak or *sāl*, is made of the palmyra; and the floor is raised at least five feet from

the ground. The hut is about sixteen cubits long, and twelve broad, including the verandah, which faces the yard, and which is supported by props of palmyra. It is divided into two compartments of unequal size, the bigger one being Badan's sleeping-room, and the smaller one being the store-room of the family. The verandah is the parlour of the family. There friends and acquaintances sit on mats. In Badan's sleeping-room are kept the brass vessels of the house, and other valuables. There is no bedstead in it, for Badan sleeps on the mud floor, a mat and a quilt stuffed with cotton interposing between his body and mother earth. There is not much light in the room, for the thatch of the verandah—coming down very near the ground—prevents its admission, while there is but one small window high up in the wall towards the street.

"There is no furniture in the room; only, in one corner, a solitary box. In one side of the room two whole bamboos are stuck into the walls, on which clothes are hung, and on which the bedding is put up in the day. On the south side of the yard, and at right angles to the big hut, is a smaller hut of far inferior construction, which is used as a lumber-room, or rather as a tool-room, for keeping the implements of husbandry. In the verandah of this little hut is placed the 'dhenki,' or rice-husking pedal. From this circumstance the little hut is called the Dhenkisala. In the south-east corner of the yard, and at right angles to the Dhenkisala, is another hut of somewhat better construction, in which Gayarama (Badan's brother) sleeps, and a verandah which serves the purpose of a kitchen. The only other hut on the premises is the cow-house, situated to the north of the yard, nearly parallel to the big hut. The eastern side of the premises opens on a tank."

The Hindu family lives on the patriarchal system, and forms a sort of joint-stock company. Father, sons, grandsons, and nephews, place all their earnings in a common treasury, and the expenditure is under the control of the head of the family, or Karta. Even when from home, on business or in situations, the men must remit the balance of their earnings or wages to the Karta, who also takes charge of the women and children in the absence of the fathers and husbands.

This is a great convenience to the Hindu, who cannot take his family about with him; and so when the head of a family is

growing old, the sons take it in turn to remain at home to take care of the common interests, women and children. But it is not usual for a man to become a Karta himself until he has attained a considerable age, for when a father dies, it is his younger brother, and not his eldest son, who usually succeeds to the headship. Still, when a son does succeed, all his brothers, however near they may be to him in age, will submit to his authority as respectfully as they did to that of the father. At least, this used to be the case; but nowadays there is a growing spirit of freedom, and the younger members of a family will often, on the death of the Karta, insist upon a partition of the common property. The next person in authority in the family is the chief wife, who may be either the spouse or the mother of the Karta for the time being. Her influence controls the management of the household, and the conduct of the female members. She superintends the cooking, etc., and she is usually a very hard-working person indeed, for she has an immense number of religious festivals to attend to, and daily religious duties and ceremonies to perform in addition to her household work. Sometimes, as when a daughter marries a poorer man than her father, or one of those pests of the country, a Kulin Brahman, or travelling sacred husband, the family may be swelled by the addition of sons-in-law. But whatever objections there may be to the patriarchal system, it has one good feature—it obviates the necessity of poor-rates and poor-houses; for the idle and worthless, as well as the sick and aged members of a family, are sheltered and maintained just as if they were contributing their full share to the common purse. Wandering beggars, of course, are to be seen occasionally; but food and shelter are always accorded them, since it is considered a disgrace if any are known to be in actual want. This is the theory; but no doubt in India, as in other places, theory and practice are not always in perfect harmony.

The relatives are not the only members of a Hindu family. There is also the priest; for every well-appointed house has its shrine, at which no one but a Brahman can officiate. All Brahmans are not priests, but all priests are Brahmans. Now, if the Karta is not a Brahman himself, he must support a priest out of the common funds, whose work is to bathe and anoint the family idol; recite the ritual; make the offerings of fruit and flowers; and attend

all the births, deaths, and marriages in the family. He must have a room to himself, because, being of higher caste, he cannot eat with the others. His perquisites are the offerings given to the idol, and presents on the occasion of any family events. There is also a resident astrologer in wealthy families; but more important than both is the guru, or religious guide, who initiates the Hindu into his religion, and is an extraordinary institution altogether. A Hindu writer says:

"The guru is the medium of salvation, and, therefore, his position is higher than that of the priest. Woe to the Hindu whose body and soul have not been purified by the spiritual counsels of the guru! He lives and dies a veritable beast on earth, with no hope of immortal bliss. However charitable may be his gifts, however spotless his character, be his faith in the gods ever so strong, his salvation is impossible without the guru. Both the guru and the priest vie with each other in ignorance and conceit. Both are covetous, unprincipled, and up to every vice; but the guru is much more revered than his adversary, owing to the former being a less frequent visitor, and the speculative and mysterious nature of his avocations. The guru's sway over the family is complete. His visits are generally annual, unless he be in a fix (for money) on account of an impending matrimonial or funeral ceremony in his house, when he certainly comes to you for his ghostly fee. . . . At one time these visits were regarded as auspicious events. Paterfamilias would consider the morn to have auspiciously dawned which brought with it the radiant face of his guru. Dame Nature has selected him for his precious physiological and anatomical gifts. Picture to yourself a fat, short man, having what the doctors call 'an apoplectic make,' of pretty fair complexion, round face, short nose, long ears, and eyes protruding from their sockets. Picture that face as sleek and soft, shorn of hairy vegetation, and the crown of the head perpetually kept in artificial baldness save a long tuft of hair in the centre. His countenance does not show the least sign of worldly care; plenty and ease have always been his environment. He comes with half-a-dozen famished beggars, each of whom has an important part to play in his lord's drama. One prepares his food; another his hemp smoking and opium pills; a third looks after his treasure; a fourth shaves him and

anoints his body; whilst the sixth helps him in his amatory transactions. These are not paid servants, but mere hirelings, who follow him through fire and through water for anything 'that hath a stomach in it.'"

They are social leeches, these gurus, sucking the poor people unmercifully and battenning on their blood. In the most recent of the Hindu sacred books, the "Tantras," there has been a cunning interpolation in favour of the guru. It sets forth his infinite power in the most extravagant fashion, as thus:

"Of the word guru, the 'g' is the cause of friction; the 'r' destroys sin; the 'u' is Siva himself; the whole word is the Eternal Brahma, excellent and inexplicable. He, whose lips pronounce the sound guru, with what sin is he chargeable? The articulation of 'g' annihilates the sin even of killing a Brahman; the sins of the present birth are removed by pronouncing 'u;' of ten thousand births, by the pronunciation of 'ru.'"

This is laying it on a little too thick even for a Hindu. Truth compels us to state that the guru, generally, is a "shocking bad lot," and if the mild Hindu could only shake him off, he would be only too glad to do so. But, what between the priests and the gurus, the poor man cannot call even his soul his own. In fact, if he doesn't behave himself, his soul may be sent into a pig in his next stage of existence, or into some still more gross and humiliating form of animal life.

The life of the Indian lady—the wife of the really well-to-do Hindu—is not an enviable one. She is fenced round with all sorts of restrictions and formalities. She has no free-will, and she sees—even in the character of the apartments she occupies; in the fact that she cannot go outside her home without the consent of her husband; and in the elaborate arrangements which are made to secure her privacy on a journey—that her husband has been taught to regard her as one who is not to be implicitly trusted. Shut out by her ignorance from the world of literature, and from the employment of her mind and hands in work, she can only waste her days in frivolous occupations. Prohibited by custom from conversation with her husband, except in her own chamber; and by her want of education from sharing in his thoughts, and from being his confidential companion; she feels that she is little more to him than a slave.

As the gentlemen of the family sit and talk and amuse themselves in various ways, they are independent to a large extent of the pleasure that the company and conversation of a wife would afford.

Hindu gentlemen used to be astonished when they saw Englishmen entrust their wives to the protection of a friend on a journey.

And even more degrading than all, perhaps, is the circumstance of losing all name and identity after marriage, and being known merely as the "Mother of So-and-So." Then the customs of infant marriage and widowhood are sources of infinite misery and injustice in India, and tend to complete the degradation of woman. These subjects, however, are too wide for more than mere reference in passing just now; but it may be mentioned as a hopeful sign that some of the most able and enlightened of the Hindu gentlemen are now warmly co-operating with English ladies in efforts at reform in these customs of the country. Lord Dufferin has declared it to be impolitic for the Government to attempt to prohibit infant marriages by legislation, as he holds that any reform, to be wholesome and effective, must come from the Hindus themselves. We like to think that it is coming, and as rapidly as anything can evolve among Oriental races.

The Hindu boy is, as has been said, a much more important being than a Hindu girl. Born amid ceremonies, he is, at the age of eight, initiated with ceremony into the mysteries of his religion; the process being, as one may say, analogous to Confirmation in the Church of England. The rite is performed by the guru, who thus early gets the mild Hindu into his clutches. Among the higher castes "the sacred thread" is put on after this initiation—this being a necklace of twisted thread, which is the mark of the "spiritual aristocracy of India," and more highly prized than even the emblems of nobility which are paraded among Occidental nations.

The mention of initiation opens up a very wide subject—that of the numerous religious sects of the Hindus—much too wide, indeed, for the scope of the present article. Sir William Hunter mentions thirteen chief sects who worship Siva, and twenty leading sects who worship Vishnu; but the lesser branches of these are innumerable, besides many sects of mixed and peculiar faiths. Broadly, in the Hindu mythology, there is a Divine

Triad, consisting of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. Each personality has its followers; but those of Brahma are now few and scattered. Those of Vishnu are found chiefly in the middle classes; while those of Siva are to be found in all classes, more or less mixed up with philosophic symbolism. Sir William Hunter further says that the educated Hindu recognises, above and beyond his chosen Deity of the Triad, the Param-eswara, or One First Cause, whom the eye has not seen, and the mind cannot conceive, but who may be worshipped in any one of the forms in which he manifests his power to men.

Once upon a time, Buddhism was almost the universal religion in India. As the result of Gautama's teaching, it gained ascendancy between 600 and 300 B.C.; it undermined the power of the Brahmins, and repudiated Caste. But later came as powerful a reaction—although how and why brought about history does not explain very clearly—until Hinduism once more dominated the races. According to Mr. Rhys Davids, there are now only some seven millions of pure Buddhists in India and Burmah; but of these, judging by the census figures of 1881, not more than about a quarter of a million are in British India proper.

Hinduism is very far, then, from being the "compact system" it appears at first sight; and there are under it more complications, more diversities of opinion, more differences of practice than even under Christianity. Obviously we cannot go into details here, but in general it may be said that while each Hindu has his own chosen deity, he also acknowledges the godhead of the others. No doubt some of the abuses of Siva-worship are viewed with abhorrence by Vishnuites, and vice versa. And there are a great variety of inferior deities, spirits, or fetiches. On this point Mr. Wilkins says:

"An old Brāhman pundit and priest, with whom I frequently conversed on these subjects, told me that in his own daily worship he first made an offering to his own chosen deity, Nārāyana (Vishnu), and when this was done, he threw a handful of rice broadcast for the other deities to scramble for; and it was his hope that by thus recognising the existence and authority of these—though there was no clear notion in his mind respecting any one of them—that he would keep them in good humour towards himself. He further as-

sured me that the general idea of the Hindu was this. 'We must worship our own chosen deity with earnestness and devotion; but in order not to be disrespectful to the others, and bring upon ourselves their resentment, we must give a general acknowledgement of their existence and authority.' Stories are to be found in the Puranas clearly teaching that the most earnest devotee of one deity is not at all safe from evils that others may bring upon him; hence arises this practice of a general acknowledgement of the other beings who claim the worship of the people."

The Puranas are the Sanscrit theological works, in which the rival systems of Vishnuism and Sivaism are embodied. Each Purana lauds its own deity, and disparages, more or less directly, the other; and among them they set up quite a new mythology of minor gods, different from the old Pantheon.

As a further illustration of the sectarian character of the Puranas, it may be mentioned that in the Padma Purana, the eighteen books are classified as follows. Six of them have a general bias in favour of Siva, and inculcate his peculiar worship; are said to be imbued with the spirit of Tāmāsa, or darkness, and the study of them condemns a man to hell. Six are imbued with Sativika, or truth, and are devoted to the praise of Vishnu—the study of these is said to procure Mukti, that is, final deliverance from the evils of life and absorption into the deity. The other six are said to be imbued with Rajasa, or passion—these are devoted to the praise of Sakti, or the female principle in nature, and their study will ensure entrance into Swarga, or heaven, a smaller boon than "mukti," because its bliss is but temporary; for when a person has enjoyed all the bliss his good deeds have procured for him there, he has to be re-born into the world, and again suffer all the ills of life on earth.

"I shall never forget," says Mr. Wilkins, "the lesson I learned from some Brahmins on this subject. After preaching in a village, the priests of a neighbouring temple invited me to their home, and, in a confidential manner, asked me to tell them in a few words the essence of the religion I was trying to set up in India. After speaking of Jesus and His work, and assuring them that His disciples were by Him made pure, and then admitted into (Swarga) heaven—after a little consideration, they said that if that was all I had to offer, Christianity had no attraction for

them; they wished for 'mukti'—absorption into deity, not merely entrance into heaven, the blessedness of which they believed to be terminable!"

Polytheism, then, is the system of Hinduism, and among the masses of the people it is polytheism in very gross forms. Nevertheless, there are also high and philosophic forms of Hinduism which merit respect, and even a sort of admiration. There are fanatics in every religion, and, absurd as are some of those among the Hindus, they are not greatly more so than among the Mahomedans, and, perhaps, even than among the earlier Christians.

Some of the Hindu ascetics are, however, very curious. For instance, the *Urddhabahus* (holders up of arms) are those who stand in one posture for years, holding one or both of their arms above the head until the muscles become contracted, and they cannot bring them down again to their sides. Some also close their fists, and allow their nails to grow until they completely pass through the hands. These men generally travel alone, and wander from shrine to shrine. The *Akas-mukhis*, again, are those who turn their face towards the sky, until the muscles of the neck become fixed, and they cannot alter this most painful position. The peculiarity of the *Nakhis* is, that they allow their nails to grow without being cut. The *Gudaras* travel about with a small pan of metal, in which they burn sandal and other scented wood in the houses they may visit collecting alms; their method of asking alms being the mere repetition of the word "*Alakh*," meaning that God's nature is incapable of being described.

The *Sukharas*, *Rukharas*, and *Ukharas*, are other ascetics who have nothing distinctive save their dress, excepting the *Ukharas*, who drink spirituous liquors and eat meat. The *Nagas* are those who go about naked, allow their hair and beards to grow, use arms, and seem to be ready to take part in any rows that may arise—a sort of professional vagabonds.

Most terrible of all are the *Thugs*, whose religion is murder; and if any one wants to know anything about this remarkable sect—now, happily, almost if not entirely extinct—he should read that wonderful book by Captain Meadows Taylor, called "*The Confessions of a Thug*."

But enough of the religious sects of Hinduism. The tendency of the educated classes is thought to be towards the new

Deistic sect established by Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, not many years ago, called the *Brahmo Samaj*, which aims at breaking down caste, abolishing infant-marriage and enforced widowhood and broadening generally the aspirations and practices of the professors of the faith.

The mention of caste recalls what we said, that Hinduism is also a social organisation. Its basis is caste; and it is by caste distinctions that the Hindu religion has been so well preserved. The word itself is of Portuguese origin, and was applied by the Portuguese conquerors to designate the peculiar systems of worship and of social distinctions which they observed among the Hindus. The Indian word is "*jati*," or *gena*, and "*jatibhedha*" means the distinction of races. Caste, however, no longer means difference of race, but every conceivable distinction of original, hereditary, religious, artificial, and conventional import. Some idea of the minute regulations, etc., of the system may be gathered from the following extract from Dr. Wilson's work on "Caste:"

"It has for infancy, pupilage, and manhood, its ordained methods of sucking, sipping, drinking, and eating; of washing, anointing; of clothing and ornamenting the body; of sitting, rising, reclining; of moving, visiting, travelling; of speaking, reading, listening, and reciting; and of meditating, singing, working, and fighting. It has its laws for social and religious rights, privileges, and occupations; for education, duty, religious service; for errors, sins, transgressions; for intercommunication, avoidance, and excommunication; for defilement and purification; for fines and other punishments. It unfolds the ways of committing what it calls sins, accumulating sin, and of putting away sin; of acquiring, dispensing, and losing merit. It treats of inheritance, conveyance, possession, and dispossession of property; and of bargains, gains, loss and ruin. It deals with death, burial, and burning; and with commemoration, assistance, and injury after death. It interferes, in short, with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows, or what is supposed to precede and follow, life. It reigns supreme in the innumerable classes and divisions of the Hindus, whether they originate in family descent, in religious opinions, in civil or sacred occupations, or in local residence; and it professes to regulate all their interests, affairs, and relationships. Caste is the guiding principle

of each of the classes and divisions of the Hindus, viewed in their distinct and associated capacity. A caste is any of the classes or divisions of Hindu society. The authority of caste rests partly on written laws, partly on legendary fables and narratives, partly on the injunctions of instructors and priests, partly on custom and usage, and partly on the caprices and convenience of its votaries. 'The roots of the law,' says Manu, 'are the whole Veda, the ordinances and observances of such as perfectly understand it, the immemorial customs of good men and self-satisfaction.' No doubt that man who shall follow the rules prescribed in the Shruti (what was heard from the Veda), and in the Smriti (what was remembered from the laws) will acquire fame in this life, and in the next inexpressible happiness." Most of the castes have peculiar marks, which those initiated have to wear; but there is one common to all: "The great index of Hinduism is the tuft of hair on the crown of the head"—by which, according to the popular notion, the wearer is to be raised to heaven—"which is left there on the performance of the sacrament of tonsure, on the first or third year after birth in the case of the three great classes of the Hindus; and in the eighth year after the conception of a Brahman, in the eleventh from that of a Kshatriya, and in the twelfth from that of a Vaishya, the investiture with the sacred cord should occur."

It is impossible here even to enumerate the hundreds of varieties and subdivisions of caste. Indeed, Dr. Wilson, who died before he completed his work, had filled two volumes without exhausting the Brahman subdivisions alone. But there are four principal castes from which all the others, with their minor differences, spring. First, the Brahman, the highest of all, the first-born, which sprang from the mouth of the Supreme, is the rightful possessor of the Veda, and the chief of the whole creation. The power of the Brahman is thus expressed:

The whole world is under the power of the gods.
The gods are under the power of the Mantras (or charms used by Brahmans).
The Mantras are under the power of the Brahmans.
The Brahman is therefore our god.

The conclusion, it will be observed, is irresistible, if the premises of the syllogism be true. The Brahmans, then, are the social and religious aristocrats; and out of their caste the priesthood can alone spring. The next great caste is the Kshatriya,

which was produced by the arms of Brahma, and is the warrior caste. The third great caste is the Vaishya, which sprang from the thigh of Brahma, and comprises the merchant and farmer. The fourth great caste is the Sudra, which sprang from the feet of Brahma, and comprises the hewers of wood and drawers of water, whose duty it is to minister to the three higher castes.

There are other traditions of the four-fold origin of the Hindu race, but the above is that most commonly accepted. In Bengal there are now virtually only two of the original castes—the Brahmans and the Sudras, both subdivided into many classes, forming distinct castes in themselves. The pure Kshatriyas and the pure Vaishyas are now practically extinct; but what are now known as Sudras are the descendants of a fusion of some of the other castes. The most numerous of the well-to-do Hindus, Mr. Wilkins tells us, belong to the Vaidya and Kayastha branches of the Sudra caste. In theory, however, the Brahman remains supreme; and in practice, among the uneducated masses, he is still venerated as almost divine. The educated classes, as a rule, do not care greatly for the retention of caste, but many continue under its restraints merely on social grounds, as they do not wish to be ostracised, and they shrink from having their sons and daughters refused in marriage by families of their own race. Still, the consensus of opinion among intelligent and observing Anglo-Indians is that caste is doomed. Its own barriers have been already broken, and the whole system will gradually crumble to pieces; but the process will be slow.

Perhaps an indulgent editor may permit us, on another occasion, to say something more about caste and the wretched marriage-customs which are the curse of India. But meanwhile we must close our review of "the mild Hindu." And yet, if any one asks: "What is a Hindu?" we are bound to admit that, even as was pointed out in the Bengal Census Report of 1881, no satisfactory answer is yet forthcoming. "No answer, in fact, exists, for the term, in its modern acceptation, denotes neither a church nor a people, but a general expression, devoid of precision, and embracing alike the most punctilious disciples of pure Vedantism, the Agnostic youth, who is the product of Western education, and the semi-barbarous

hill-man, who eats without scruple anything he can procure, and is as ignorant of the Hindu mythology as the stone he worships in times of sickness and danger."

PARIS MAKING READY.

EVERYWHERE you go you find workmen in possession; flying scaffolds hang down from the fronts of the tall houses; paint-pots, whitewash buckets, are to be tumbled over in all directions—in every doorway you must gather yourself into a compact mass, and squeeze past panels all wet with paint, or sticky with varnish. "Paris se pare," she is putting on her best bib and tucker—clean and bright is not enough, she must be enamelled, resplendent. You arrive at the quiet hotel of ancient reputation; it is blocked with ladders and boarded gangways—the garçon shows you where to duck your head, and how to steer your way among planks and tressels. Madame, driven from her bureau, has encamped, with her desk, in a vacant corner of the salle, where she wrings her hands despairingly over a confused heap of account-books and docketts. Monsieur is delighted to receive you, but desolated at the confusion in which you find him. A chamber, yes—most certainly! But which chamber? Numéro ci, numéro là, where can a stray traveller at last find a nest? When a room is found, it is held in full possession by the work-people. The whole house is like a grove of singing birds. Jules, and Adolphe, and Pierre are carolling at the top of their voices, as they wield brush, or hammer, or trowel, and their voices mingle with the bumping of ladders, the rattle of planks, and the clatter of tools. Still, the French workman is adroit; he does not splash much with his plaster, or scatter showers of paint over the passers-by.

Yes, everywhere is this note of preparation to be heard—a brisk and cheerful note, for is not this forthcoming Exposition a thing to be brisk and cheerful over? Are these streets to be repaired? It is well to get the enterprise over forthwith. And piles of stones and excavated earth encumber the corners of the Boulevards. As for new buildings, they are hurried on with feverish haste. All must be ready by the sixth of May—the sackcloth removed; the ashes swept up; the covers taken off the furniture. The trees may be bare now, but in May all will be in full leaf.

All the world will be in Paris, and all the world must see Paris at her very best and brightest.

This morning, too, a cheerful note is ringing through the streets. The horn of the hunter is heard upon the Boulevards—the strange, strident notes of the "cor de chasse," which somehow seem to recall so vividly the days of old France. It is at the corner of the Rue Royale, with the church of La Madeleine in full view. There is not much that is cheerful about the Madeleine itself; which looks more like an enormous tomb than a church, with its great bronze gates, that might be the entrance—well, not exactly—to Paradise. When the flower-sellers are no longer there with their booths, and bright flowers, and green shrubs, and the scent of spring blossoms and newly-turned mould, the Madeleine looms gloomily enough over the bright scene round about.

Ah, it was just here that the last scene was enacted in the terrible tragedy of the Commune! Driven by the overwhelming forces of the Government from their barricades in the Rue Royale, the last survivors of the insurrection—some three hundred in number—took refuge in the Madeleine, and were slaughtered there to a man by the infuriated soldiery. Is it any wonder that the building has a gloomy air about it which no sunshine can brighten?

There is a funeral at the Madeleine—there is always a funeral there—but this is of a high and expensive class. It is an obsequy of ten thousand francs, says a well-informed bystander. The front of the church is hung with black, sprinkled with silver tears; the horses are caparisoned with black, and a long procession passes up the steep flight of steps that lead to the great bronze doors—the prevailing sombre hue relieved by the glitter of uniforms. Some high functionary, no doubt, to-day takes his leave of bright and charming Paris. But, as the funereal pomp disappears beneath the hangings—sable, charged with argent—a bright cavalcade appears at the corner of the street, mounted chasseurs in the garb of the Regency, who halt and sound upon their trumpets a stirring fanfare.

Away clatter the hoofs towards the Place de la Concorde, in which direction there is a gentle flow of idlers, while men, with bundles of papers under their arms, cry in nasal tones: "Programmes Officiels de la grande Cavalcade." Even here there is a note of preparation, for the cavalcade

is for the benefit of the Parisian charity called the "Mouthful of Bread;" the object of which is that no hungry person may want a morsel of bread. And the newspapers have urged the Parisians to contribute liberally to this charity, so that when strangers visit the Exposition they may see no mendicant or hungry person anywhere in the city.

When the Place de la Concorde opens to view, it is found to be well filled with a good-humoured, but slightly cynical crowd, among whom are moving masks and costumes of all kinds, received with bantering applause or jeering laughter, as the disguises are well or ill received by the surrounding populace. All the terraces, too, are lined with spectators, and altogether the scene reminds the English spectator of Trafalgar Square and the days when popular demonstrations were held there. Only, there is no touch of seriousness here, nor any note of disorder.

And yet that all may not be so calm as appears on the surface is evident by the appearance, on the walls of the terraces and the bases of the monuments, of ominous-looking red placards. During the night, industrious enthusiasts have pasted up these bills all over Paris, and they purport to be an address of the anarchists to the people of Paris, urging them to abstain from all rejoicings attending the forthcoming gathering of capitalists called the Exposition, and to await, in dignified independence, the advent of the coming social revolution. But the manifesto of the anarchists causes very little emotion. Hunger, after all, is the great anarchy; and to-day, in Paris, there is work for everybody, bread for everybody, with amusement thrown in galore; and Paris, in a gay and laughing mood, cares not a centime for all that political stuff.

For as well as being the *mi-Carême*, always a popular holiday, this also promises to be the first real day of spring. A thousand indefinite sights and sounds as significant in their way as the hum of insects and the joyful flight and song of birds, give notice that the tension of a long winter is passed, that the tedious "*chez soi*" is at an end, and that Paris is awakening to pleasant outdoor life. Down on the quays you may watch the river darting swiftly through the arches, with waters bright, and green, and sparkling. Crafty old anglers are hobbling about down below, where the strand affords a footing, or perching themselves upon heaps of stones, or of fire-wood just landed from the

barges, and drop their lines cautiously into the swirling eddies. The steam-boats hurry by well filled with passengers, who read, or smoke, or ply the needle, while a gentle murmur of voices mingles with the clatter of the engines and the creaking of the primitive tiller. The cheerful shouts of children are heard in the public gardens, while the old people sun themselves on the benches. Chairs and tables cluster in thickening rows under the outside awnings of the cafés, and the shops are displaying their brightest and most tempting wares. Now open carriages begin to ply, and the daintiest and freshest of costumes, the most elaborate of chapeaux, to make their appearance. And all these signs and tokens of spring, and a hundred more, have a share in the same note of preparation. It is the spring-time of the year of the Exposition, of the year of fêtes and surprises, a year that is to be full of pleasure and profit, a year of truce amidst the pains and sacrifices of a time of doubt and expectation.

Surely the temple of Janus is closed, while the Champ de Mars is covered with the halls and galleries devoted to the service of art and industry. And here the work goes on merrily, notwithstanding fête or holiday. It is a city we behold, more extensive than many a famous city of old, which has risen like magic from its foundations; a city of public buildings, pavilions, palaces, and theatres. From the very brink of the river rise the buildings of the Exposition; they stretch for nearly three-quarters of a mile over the extent of the Champ de Mars, they are continued in a narrow line along the banks of the river, over the Quai d'Orsay for a mile, and again expanding in dimensions, are spread over the whole Esplanade des Invalides, an area of nearly half the dimensions of the Champ de Mars. And over all this vast extent of ground the note of preparation is incessant. There is no respite from the music of trowel, hammer, and saw; and the buildings, as they approach completion, have an air of solidity and even grandeur, as if they were meant to endure for centuries, instead of being destined to pass away with the leaves of autumn. As for the Eiffel Tower, did we not meet it on the Place de la Concorde just now, airing itself among the masks and mummers, and more applauded than any of them? Bon! for the Eiffel Tower.

But if we work hard in the morning, when the hour for *déjeuner* arrives then

away with the tools of our craft, whether pen or pencil, hammer or trowel, and assuming "costume de fête," let us adjourn for our café to the Boulevards. All Paris is upon the streets; you might walk upon the heads of the people all the way from the Madeleine to the Porte St. Martin. But there are a couple of chairs just vacant in our favourite corner, sheltered from the wind, which has still a chilly touch about it, and where the sunshine seems warmer and more pleasant. Where the coffee, too, retains some of the ancient "goût," for in this respect, alas! there is a sad falling off. It is only old-fashioned people who take their café, and the art of making it will soon be numbered among the lost.

And so the world defiles before us—the whole gay, chattering, brisk, animated world of the Boulevards—a world that only demands the pretence of shows and games, so satisfied is it with being able to talk, and laugh, and spread itself in the sunshine.

Gay sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, whom all the world can please.

And yet not so easily pleased, perhaps, now, as when poor Oliver Goldsmith wandered by with flute and empty wallet, and perhaps more easily moved to scoffs and jeers than to enthusiasm.

Among the crowd that fills the roadway, a straggling line of carriages slowly defiles. Sometimes a gaily-decorated car arouses a tempest of shouts and cries. It is filled, perhaps, with a crew of jolly *Blanchisseuses*, who exchange gentle badinage with the crowd about them. Or it is a more solid vehicle, that carries *Messieurs les Bouchers*; or a van full of *Pierrots*, showering advertisements and repartees, more vigorous than refined, all about them. When anything excites a more than usual stir among the crowd, everybody jumps upon his or her chair to peer over the heads of the multitude. There are more "her chairs" than "his chairs" to-day in the chief cafés. *Maman*, and *Belle-Maman*, and *Bébé* are here in all force, with the laughing Norman nurse, who talks and enjoys herself more than anybody. There are more *Bébés*, and more *Mamans*, and more nurses. The *Bébés* fraternise among each other, and clutch at the silver-headed sticks and umbrellas of smiling *messieurs*. The women quarrel occasionally over the chairs. Here is one who claims to retain a seat, "*pour son mari*," whom the other politely insinuates to be a mythical character. But, indeed, there is no vacant

seat to be had all among the long rows of cafés and brasseries, where but yesterday was but a beggarly array of empty benches. "Yes, for the moment here is business *pour 'casser la croûte*," cries the panting manager, overwhelmed with orders, and almost unable to move among his crowd of customers.

At last the grande cavalcade appears, whose assembly we witnessed in the *Place de la Concorde* in the morning. It has been all round Paris, and is a little bit fatigued and dusty. The *Marquises*, *Bergères à la Watteau*, the *Troubadours*, or what not have disappeared—some of them driven off the field by the merciless storm of chaff that assailed them. And the "*Ville de Paris*," that great, gilt plaster figure on the triumphal car, has lost her head—not sacrificed to popular vengeance, but jolted off at some villainous crossing. But the trumpets still sound the fanfare; the collectors, with their tin jugs, and their false noses, still jocosely solicit the benevolences of the public. Alas! it is a public that laughs a good deal, but pays very little.

And so the scene goes on till far into the night, when still the lights glitter; the masks are more numerous; the public balls are in full swing; the theatres releasing crowded houses; the cries and "sifflements" more shrill and piercing. And on the morrow Paris awakes, not too early, but lively and vigorous as ever. Yes, it was a "*beau jour*," that of yesterday, but a nothing to what we shall see by-and-by.

DESERTERS.

SOMETHING like five thousand men desert every year from the British Army. There is a class of deserters by profession, who make a regular living by enlisting, deserting, and selling their kits. Cases are recorded where this has been done as often as seventeen times by the same individual.

It is only in comparatively recent years, however, that it has been possible to pursue this profitable business. By the Mutiny Act of 1858, it was enacted that "on the first and every subsequent conviction for desertion the court martial—in addition to any other punishment—may order the offender to be marked on the left side, two inches below the arm-pit, with the letter D; such letter not to be less than one inch long, and to be marked upon him with some ink or gunpowder, or other preparation, so as to

be visible and conspicuous, and not liable to be obliterated."

The designation of this process by the term "branding," which led many people to believe that the men were marked with a hot iron, had a good deal to do with the popular feeling against it, which ended in its being omitted from the Mutiny Act. Of course, while the regulation was in force, it was impossible for a man to enlist more than once without the authorities discovering his antecedents.

Pure and simple dislike to the service seems to be the common cause for desertion, but it is interesting to note the reasons given by deserters themselves for the extreme course they have adopted. The chaplain of a London prison some time ago made an attempt to find out from the six hundred and sixteen men confined there for desertion, the causes which had induced them to abandon the colours. Of this number, one hundred and sixty-one informed him that they had left the army because they fervently hated the life which they found themselves obliged to lead; one hundred and fourteen confessed that drink had been the cause of their misbehaviour; one hundred, that they had deserted "to better themselves;" seventy-two urged that they had allowed themselves to be influenced by the persuasions of bad companions; fifty-one had gone on the spree, had overstayed their leave, and had not been able to pluck up courage to return to their regiments, through fear of the consequences of their indiscretion; forty-eight had been so badgered by their comrades, or had found the treatment of the non-commissioned officers so harsh, that they had been driven to seek a refuge in flight; forty-one had absented themselves for some cause or other, and disclaimed any real intention of deserting; debt had driven sixteen to take the fatal step; a dozen had run away because leave had been refused them; and, finally, one had absconded because he had been foolish enough to get married without leave.

It is found that a large majority of deserters are men who have only served for a few months, and the real reason for the step is undoubtedly, in the case of most of these, a great disgust at finding the service very different in reality to the picture they had painted of it while listening to the cajolements of the recruiting sergeant, or reading highly-coloured stories of the joys of a soldier's life. The obligation to get through a certain amount of

work is terribly distasteful to some men, who belong to the lazy class of the community, and have usually enlisted because they thought a soldier's life meant sitting about in barracks and smoking, with just a little drill thrown in.

A very short sojourn with the colours serves to show them that this idea is a most erroneous one; and it becomes their chief care to discover some method by which they may escape the hard work and strict routine which are the soldier's lot. Purchase is the only legitimate way in which they can effect their release from surroundings that are so distasteful to them. But the chances are very small of such men having the requisite amount of money at their command, or of their being able to persuade relatives and friends to advance a sufficient sum.

The general impression amongst those upon whom they have any claim is sure to be that a little discipline and hard work will do them all the good in the world, and that, as they have joined the army with their eyes open, they must make the best of their bargain; and so there is nothing left for it but desertion. There are no particular difficulties in the way of the soldier who has made up his mind that he will run away from his regiment; and when such a man as we have been speaking of does run away, there is a very infinitesimal chance of his ever turning out a respectable member of society. He is either captured and brought back to undergo a term of imprisonment for his offence—in which case the chances are he will desert again as soon as an opportunity offers—or, finding that, without a character, he is unable to make a living in a civil capacity, he gives himself up, and spends the remainder of his term of service in a state of suppressed mutiny, only doing enough work to keep himself out of trouble. A few deserters, of course, escape detection; and of these a still smaller proportion may settle down to a steady life. It may, however, be taken as an axiom that a man who has so little principle as to run away from his duty, will never do much good in the world.

Discontent with the rations and disappointment at finding that, after the free kit with which he starts is worn out, he has to replace his articles of clothing out of his pay, are causes which seriously augment the disgust with which many young soldiers soon get to look upon their life.

Among deserters there is sure to be a

certain proportion of men who have always borne good characters in the regiments to which they belonged, and who would never have been suspected of any tendency towards running away from the life that apparently suited them so well. In all probability they would not themselves be able to assign any reason for the step. A sudden freak is the only cause that can be put forward in justification of their foolishness.

A small number of men desert because they fancy that they can do better in some other capacity. There is an amusing story told of one of this class, who suddenly and completely disappeared from the town in which his regiment was stationed. He was a silent man, who had always kept a great deal to himself, and who had been particularly noticeable for his habit of always going for walks alone, quite in opposition to the usual custom of men of his class. The first tidings his regiment heard of him was conveyed in a letter that the commanding officer received from a fashionable watering-place in Southern Europe. It came from a lady who signed herself Julia B——t, the surname being that of the missing man. This communication revealed the secret of his desertion, and of the solitary habits that had distinguished him.

It appeared that the wealthy widow of a builder in the neighbourhood had fallen in love with him, and that the two had got married, and had departed abroad for their honeymoon. The letter concluded by a formal tender of "my husband's" resignation.

In another case a soldier deserted, not to be married, but to escape that fate. The true story of his enlistment was never known to the authorities. All they did know was that one day a young woman of very determined aspect arrived at the barracks with sufficient money to obtain his purchase, giving out that she was his sweetheart, and that she had come to buy him out preparatory to their marriage. It was noticed that the swain did not seem to meet the advances of his lady-love with much ardour; but this was attributed to a natural shyness at finding himself in such a delicate position.

The negotiations for his discharge went smoothly; but on the very day that his papers were expected he disappeared, and the wrathful damsel, who found to her disgust that the money she had handed over was forfeited, had to do without the

husband she had been at such trouble and expense to secure.

It will, no doubt, occur to many readers of this article that a man who wished to desert would find an insuperable difficulty in his regimental attire, which would, of course, betray his identity wherever he went. But this difficulty is really non-existent, for in every garrison town there are men who will provide a soldier with a suit of ragged civilian garments in exchange for his regimentals and as much money as they can screw out of him.

It is needless to say that these persons find it well to exercise the utmost care that their transactions shall not become known to the authorities; and so cleverly do they hide all trace of their forbidden business, that it is very seldom that one of them renders himself liable to the term of two years' imprisonment, which is the punishment for aiding and abetting deserters.

WALPURGIS NIGHT AND MAY DAY.

WHAT would Dan Chaucer, or gentle Spencer think; what would Robin Hood and the men in green, or Queen Bess and her lively courtiers say; if they got leave to re-visit the earth, and spend a May Day with us in this last quarter of the nineteenth century? I fear they would go sulkily back to where they came from, early in the evening, making moan to one another that May Day is not what it was. And they would not be far wrong. The old birthday of Spring comes and goes for us unnoticed. According to the calendar, the vernal season begins on the twenty-first of March. The first of May has not received brevet rank as a bank-holiday, so there is neither reason nor leisure for those flourishes of trumpets, those brave processions, and goodly companies, those flowery garlands, that singing and dancing, with which our forefathers used to celebrate one of the merriest festivals of the year.

This omission of ours may be the cause of, or it may be caused by, the obvious fact that more often than not winter hangs about long after May has begun, and gives small opportunity for the development of his eager successor's experiments on buds and blossoms. Anyhow, the Maypoles, the mummers, and the morris dancers have all slipped away out of sight and out of mind; they could not match their deliberate

steps to the speed of the march of progress. And the village folk, instead of gathering on the village green early on the first May morning to see how much jollification they can get through before the stars come out and send them in to bed, take third-class excursion tickets on Whit-Monday, spend three-quarters of their precious holiday in stuffy railway carriages, to test the doubtful pleasure of an hour or two in the noisy streets of London, or the almost as confusing scene of a favourite seaside resort, crowded with trippers.

Washington Irving, pleading for the observances of old customs and traditions, has well said, "that they tended to infuse poetical feelings into the common people, and to sweeten and to soften the rudeness of rustic manners without destroying their simplicity; indeed, it is to the decline of this happy simplicity that the falling away of these customs may be traced. The rural dance, the homely pageant, have gradually disappeared, in proportion as the peasantry have become expensive in their pleasures, artificial in their tastes, and too knowing for simple enjoyments."

If our English race had not spread itself east and west, north and south, assimilating so many conflicting elements with its capacious digestive powers, forgetting so much of its ancient, self-contained spirit in its ever-increasing thirst for new knowledge and new fields for action, perhaps our yeomen and peasantry might have remained as true to our old traditions as their Teuton far-off cousins in Saxony, Westphalia, and Bavaria; but as it is, we are rather proud of having forgotten the lore of our infancy; of having outgrown the garments of our youth; of having become men, and put away childish things.

In the nebulous days of those dread, mysterious despots, the Druids, the first of May was a national festival for the Celts of Britain and Gaul; while the Teuton worshippers of Thor kindled fresh altar fires in honour of Ostara, goddess of Spring, and their long processions wound, by torchlight, up the hills, singing and invoking her protection against the Jötans, the powers of darkness and malignant evil.

The centuries rolled the Druids' rites out of recollection; but the German festival gained a new and holier character from its association with the name of a saintly Anglo-Saxon princess, Walpurga, who left her father's house in England to carry to

those who dwelt in the spiritual and moral darkness of the deep German forest a purer light for this world, and a better hope for the world to come. Against the witches and wild demons of the Urwald, to whom the German heathens owned a terrible allegiance, and acknowledged with hideous rites, Walpurga waged a lifelong warfare of prayer and exhortation; and when, after her death, she was canonised, her "works followed her," and she became the especial protectress against magic and witchcraft, and all the uncanny powers of the air; and on the first of May, the day set apart in her honour, it became a pious duty of the faithful to organise a general attack on the evil-spirit world. This crusade his Satanic Majesty, according to the legends, and conformably to the well-known perversity of his disposition, mocked and defied by holding annually, on that sacred midnight, high court for all witches and wizards on the Brocken, or as some say, on the Blocksberg or the Staffelstein.

So the festival has from time immemorial been kept with mixed feelings. The old Teuton carouse over the new birth of Nature has collected round itself a cluster of legends and superstitions drawn from these conflicting elements of light and darkness; and the superstitions and legends are so blent and tangled with the old mythological parables of good and evil, life and death, that they offer a fruitful field alike to poet, philologist, philosopher, and historian.

Foremost among those who have been attracted by the poetry of the double aspect of "Walpurgis Night," stand Goethe and Mendelssohn. Three times has Goethe woven the primitive allegory into the many-hued tissue of his poetry.

His "Erste Walpurgis Nacht" (First Walpurgis Night), which deals more directly than the other two with the vernal character of the theme, inspired his admirer, Mendelssohn, with the wonderfully appropriate music which he composed to illustrate the poet's conception. In this composition, which he himself calls a "Symphony-cantata," he has used all the resources of his art and genius to realise for us the Druidical incantations in their fierce intensity; the scarcely less gross fanaticism of the Christian appeals to Heaven to the All-Father to shield them from the attacks of the Evil One and his hordes of witches; the thronging crowd who go forth into the forest to welcome "laughing May," and to kindle expiatory

fires (the Christian continuation of the fires of Ostara) as types of the cleansing of their minds from doubt.

Goethe's "Second Walpurgis Night" is in the first part of the drama of "Faust"; it comprises the well-known Brocken scene and an interlude, wherein spirits, witches, weathercocks, wills-o'-the-wisp, and other miscellaneous eccentricities sing short, saucy stanzas to celebrate the golden wedding of Oberon and Titania.

In the third and last Walpurgis Night, which forms part of the second drama of "Faust," Goethe has allowed his Pegasus more than ordinary poetic licence. The scene is laid not in any of the recognised German infernal banquetting halls, but in the Pharsalian fields and on the slopes of Mount Peneus. Mephistopheles is there with his jibes and jeers; but the Faust is the lover of Helen of Troy, not of Marguerite; and the witches are represented by syrens such as tempted Ulysses; sphinxes, such as Edipus out-witched; and ants of colossal build.

But the savage legend of the North does not blend harmoniously with the voluptuous mythology of Greece; it is weird and fantastic; it does not strive after grace; it is, according to Carlyle, full of sincerity; and, as the sincerest of allegories, it has become, in popular superstition, highly realistic. The naked witches, riding on their broomsticks, to and from the Sabbat, have full power to work their wicked will on unwary creatures, biped and quadruped, of every genus and species. It is with unquestioning faith in these powers of evil that the peasants of Thuringia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Westphalia, avail themselves, on Walpurgis Eve, of all the precautions which tradition has handed down from generation to generation.

The prayers of the holy Abbess form no part of these defensive ceremonies. Those who desire to dwell in safety from "magic sleight, charms, and all beside," do something more demonstrative than praying; and the "faith that is in them" proves itself by a heterogeneous mass of works. With much noise and clamour they sally forth, as night falls, to nail up crosses and horseshoes on the doors of barn and stable, and to lay green sods on every threshold. Then the doors are securely fastened, so that the house-blessing may remain within. Ingress and egress are alike forbidden, for this mysterious benediction is so volatile and portable that it may escape in a moment if a wily evil-wisher, with impor-

tunities for bread, salt, or a light, prevails on the inmates of the house to open to him; or it may be carried forth and lost on the wisp of straw which adheres to the milkmaid's petticoats as she leaves the cow-byre.

Besides the interest of these domestic precautions, there is occasionally the public excitement of hunting down and chastising with hazel switches—no mean substitute for the ancient torture-chamber—any one who may have gained, justly or unjustly, the undesirable reputation of being in league with the Evil One; meanwhile, those who are too old or too infirm to take an active part in the proceedings, sit in the chimney corner cronng out uncanny stories of ghostly import, and anxiously counting the minutes until the hour of conflict shall have passed with the hour of midnight.

Neither are those typical fires yet extinct which the early Christians borrowed from the goddess Ostara. They are piled up, made fat for the burning, and kindled at night-fall along the narrow valleys like rivers of flame. Long processions, in quaint dresses, still march as their forefathers marched, carrying great torches to the tops of the hills, so that the light of Saint Walpurga's fires may fall far and wide, and fertilise the soil which is ready for seed-time.

But it is not by the peasantry alone, nor only with superstitious customs that the first of May is observed in Germany.

The present writer's experience is drawn from the festival as he once or twice helped to enjoy it at Leipzig. How simple, novel, and delightful that experience was to a mind whose memories of spring had become obscured by London smoke, I cannot say. Our waking up, on that well-remembered morning, in the sober old University town, was hastened by the knowledge that we had to be dressed by seven, in order to go with some kind friends to a Fröh concert in some public gardens. Perhaps you shrug your shoulders, good reader, at this doubtful pleasure. You do not know unless you have tried it, how enjoyable it was to go and take one's place at a little table in the open air, to be served with a cup of hot coffee and an appetising roll and butter; to sit in the early sunshine and listen to the excellent orchestra discoursing music appropriate to the occasion. It was a naïve proceeding, no doubt, but charming to a mind which till then had realised nothing of May but the east wind.

After the concert we were joined by

other friends, and, leaving the city behind, we took our leisurely way to a certain village, where we were to meet the last and most important member of our party, the Professor, who was to be our host. There, about midday, we sat down to the plentiful repast of simple viands, which he had ordered. The Pfannkuchen particularly recur to my memory. How we enjoyed them after our long country walk! Nor must I forget the great bowl of Mai-trank, which we first compounded, and then drank to the last drop, with much clinking of tall green glasses, and many speeches, good, bad, and indifferent. What was added to the Rhine-wine to convert it into that ambrosial drink, I had better not divulge. It might sound less tempting than it really was.

In the evening, we drove back in time to hear a glorious performance of "Fidelio" at the theatre; after which, supper at the Professor's, with more Mai-trank, and more hobnobbing concluded the day's proceedings, and we went to bed with the firm resolve that, wherever approaching Spring might find us another year, we would shake ourselves free from all encumbrances, strap on our traveller's wallet, take up our wanderer's staff, and reach the quaint, old-world Saxon-land in time to receive with due honours, and to enjoy with suitable simplicity, the first of May.

SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

I SPENT my holiday last year in the neighbourhood of Shillingbury;* and, though it is an article of faith with me that a man should be very temperate and discriminating in the matter of visits to his birthplace, I found myself more than once treading my native soil, and gazing up at the window of the room in which I am fabled to have drawn my first breath, and sauntering about the roads where I had been taken for walks—how I hated walks in those days!—and trespassing on private property to find the thorn-bush in which I had rifled my first bird's-nest, and the ditch in which I had sailed my toy ships and got wet feet, and subsequent coughs and colds. The thorn-bush was clean gone, and the ditch seemed to have grown very narrow. It still abounded with water-cresses, however, and I called to mind

certain days when I had taken, on its banks, *al fresco* meals of bread and butter, supplemented by the cresses drawn straight from their oozy bed.

Change was everywhere visible in the physical features of the place. An uncompromising brick wall now prevented little boys from falling into the mill-dam, whereas, in my time, a ragged old wooden fence gave free admission to the youth of the place. A new Wesleyan chapel stood on part of the garden, which was once Mr. Cutler Bridgeman's; and Jonas Harper's house had been enlarged and converted into the premises of the Shillingbury Coffee Tavern Company, Limited. In spite of the above-named, and many other revolutions, I still found that Shillingbury itself was less changed for me than the inhabitants thereof. I cannot say, however, that this discovery raised up in my breast those emotions of wonder and regret in which persons of a sentimental turn are wont to indulge, when they make the discovery that the world has declined to stand still for twenty years or so for their especial benefit. I found that quite half of the people, who were to the fore in my youth, were dead and buried. This may have been a matter of regret to me; but there was no reason why I should be astonished at a phenomenon so strictly in accord with the relentless spirit of Nature in dealing with mankind. A large proportion of those who survived were people I neither knew nor cared for; and, after deducting these, I found that the residue had, for the most part, either clean forgotten me, or ceased to take any interest in me and my doings.

On the day of my last visit, I called on certain of the tradesmen yet surviving, with whom my family had formerly had dealings, and in no case did any one of them seem conscious that I was doing any honour by my visit. Mr. Robbins, the grocer, draper, and general warehouseman, was condescendingly familiar, and there ran through his discourse a vein of satire against people who did not spend their money amongst their own people. I curtailed my visit, as Mr. Robbins's remarks were becoming manifestly personal, and went on to Mrs. Mallows, at the Berlin wool warehouse and fancy repository. This good lady seemed to think that it showed a conceited, stuck-up disposition for any one to leave his birthplace in search of fortune; but the same rule, apparently, did not apply to the case of her own son,

* See "ALL THE YEAR ROUND," New Series, Nos. 736 to 863.

who, in her own words, "had got a situation in one of the first dentist's establishments in London, and pulled out the teeth of Earls, and Lords, and nobody knows who, every day of the week."

I made a few more calls after this; but in every case I found that friendly appreciation was a very scarce article in Shillingbury, so I went to take my lunch in the commercial room of the "Black Bull;" and when I had dispatched my rather dismal meal, I looked out of the window to watch the movements of a stout gentleman in a low-crowned hat and drab cloth gaiters, who was making a circuit of the market-place. First, he halted at Mr. Ribstone the butcher's shop, and held a long colloquy with the master of the establishment, poking his forefinger, with the air of an expert, into the yellow fat of a side of beef, emphasizing his remarks—probably critical—by bringing down his iron-shod stick with a sounding thump on the pavement, and settling the dispute—for, from his argumentative carriage, I was sure there had been one—by letting off a bellow of laughter, in the midst of which he walked away. Then he went to Mr. Tawner's, the saddler; and Mr. Tawner, a stand-off sort of a man as a rule, touched his cap and came to the door, and stood talking as long as it seemed good to the stout gentleman to darken his doorway. Then he intercepted Dan Curtis, the bill-poster, in the middle of his work, and if Dan had been in the presence of the Prince of Wales he could not have been more cringingly polite. Old women, bringing in eggs and fowls for sale, bobbed the most respectful of curtsies, as they passed; and the hearty greeting which came from young Sir Francis Kedgbury, as he drove through the town to catch the train, did not elicit from the stout gentleman anything more respectful in the way of a return salute than a sort of "I'm as good a man as you" kind of nod. Then he came across to the "Black Bull," and walked boldly into the bar-parlour—a sanctum into which I should have no more thought of intruding, than into the Rector's study—and called for a glass of mild ale.

"It's a fine day, isn't it, Mr. Gay?" said the landlady, with a deferential accent. Her manner to me, in talking over old times, had been quite as familiar as anything I have before described.

"Pretty tidy, pretty tidy," said the stout gentleman, between his sips of ale.

"You've got a stranger in the Commercial, I see. What line is he in?"

The landlady's reply was inaudible to me. The stout gentleman gave a contemptuous grunt at it, whatever it was, and tramped out of the house, after he had finished his ale.

"Mr. Gay," I said to myself, as I watched his departing figure. "Gay. Who can he be? There used to be a little cattle-dealer named Gay living down at Brooksbank End, and a son of his, a dirty little cad in inky, patched corduroy trousers, came as a free-boy to the Grammar School some time before I left. He had red hair, and the stout gentleman who had just gone out was auburn in complexion, and with a slight cast in his eye as well. It was the same with Gay, junior. One of his eyes, I remember, used to wander about in a most undisciplined manner, and a contumelious epithet was habitually assigned to him on account of this visual peculiarity. I called to mind, likewise, that I had once cut Gay, junior, across the shins with a hockey stick, and I hoped that Mr. Gay might forget this circumstance in the event of our meeting. He was five feet ten in height, broad-shouldered, and with a fist like a leg of mutton.

As soon as he was well clear of the premises, I took the opportunity of accosting the landlady, who was standing by the door, and of leading the conversation up to the subject of the stout gentleman.

"Why, you must know him," she said. "Mr. Joshua Gay. He's often runnin' up to London and about the country, so I should ha' thought as you might ha' come across him. But he's a busy man hisself, and, I dare say, have forgot all about you."

"Do you mean that he is the son of the cattle-dealer who used to live at Brooksbank End?"

"O' course he is; son o' Barker Gay, as they used to call him. He was a 'mazin' dull boy at school, as I've heard talk, and he ain't much of a scholar now; but he have got on in the world, for all that."

Then the landlady went on to give me an account of the rise and progress of Mr. Joshua Gay. Mr. Gay, senior, had not dealt judiciously in cattle, and had, in consequence, died insolvent; and at his death his son was reduced to the necessity of living by his wits—a method of bread-winning which, even in Arcadia, seldom fosters a high standard of integrity. Mr. Gay, junior, at one time sank so low as to follow the calling of a cattle-drover;

but, by hook or by crook, he managed to scrape a little money together, and then set up for himself as a fowl-dealer. Then he rose to pigs, and finally to sheep and oxen.

"But," said the landlady, "he never did nothin' o' no account till he got in with young Mr. Suttaby o' Hedgelands. That was a lucky day for Jos Gay, that was."

From the landlady's manner while she was speaking of Mr. Gay's early struggles, I did not gather any sign to indicate that his system of business had been anything but that of an honest man; but when she came to speak of his "getting in" with my old friend, Arthur Suttaby, a certain inflection of her voice, a certain knowing look in her eye, seemed to proclaim that, in her opinion, the move by which Mr. Jos Gay laid the foundation of his fortunes was one of those strokes which one naturally expects from practitioners who have opened their career by picking up a living by their wits.

"Ah, poor Mr. Suttaby!" the landlady went on, "he never was much of a man o' business. He had a craze, when he was a young fellow, to be a lawyer's clerk, or something o' that sort, same as you are, and he never took to farmin' with a heart; and his wife, Lord ha' mercy upon us! what could a man, as ha' got a farmhouse to look after, want with a wife from London? Poor and proud, that's about her style; and she ha' made her husband poor enough, too; and 'tis no fault of hers if he ain't too proud to look at any of his old friends. He 'pear to be stand-off like, when she's by, but when he come in here sometimes, he's just as friendly like as ever he was; but he's right melancholy nowadays, and begin to look quite the old man, as old as you do, though he must be four years, or more, younger."

"You are within a little," I said, smiling at the good lady's candour; "but what has his melancholy to do with Mr. Joshua Gay?"

"I'll tell you, if you let me go on. Well, Mrs. Suttaby must have it, as it was low and ungenteel like for a man in her husband's place to go to market and buy his sheep and bullocks, like other farmers, so he must needs go to a dealin' man to send his sheep and bullocks in; and then, when they was fatted, the dealin' man must come into his yard and buy 'em, so as Mr. Suttaby needn't soil his boots wi' goin' to market. Well, little as you know about business, you must see as a man goin' on like this would always buy in the dearest market and sell in the cheapest.

Old John Rickman did his business for a bit; but after he broke his neck, comin' away from the railway station drunk one night, Jos Gay got his foot in, and he ha' planted it firmer and firmer every year, till now folks say as all the stock belong to him and not to Mr. Suttaby. Jos ha' got a long head, and no mistake."

"But," I said, "supposing that Mr. Gay is a fair-dealing man, I don't see why Mr. Suttaby should suffer. Mr. Gay seems very much respected in the place, so I conclude he is to be trusted."

"I dare say," replied the landlady; "but if I had a cow to sell to him, I'd sell it by my own valuation, and not by his, as he persuade Mr. Suttaby to do. He goes and pitch a lot o' tales about the trade bein' bad, and generally gets the stock at his own price. As to his bein' respected in the place, why the fact is, that he ha' got a lot o' 'em under his thumb, and that make folks civil and polite, you know; but, Lord ha' mercy! here's Mr. Gay a comin' back after something." And here the landlady waddled out into the market-place to greet the great man, and her demeanour was so servile and deferential, that I could not help suspecting that she herself might be amongst the many she had just spoken of as being accustomed to feel the pressure of Mr. Joshua Gay's thumb.

I sought again the seclusion of the commercial room, for the discourse I had just listened to did not make me very keen to renew Mr. Gay's acquaintance. The few minutes' talk I had just held with the good landlady had, moreover, given me much food for reflection.

I had left Shillingbury, which then contained many good friends of mine, when I was about twenty years of age. It was a sleepy-headed place enough, and fate had decreed that I should seek my bread in the great city. I did not exactly expect, like the countryman of the story, that I should find the streets paved with gold; but I certainly did figure to myself a round of delight in the mere life of the streets: the hurrying crowds, and the blazing gas lamps, and the brilliant shops. Perhaps, when I came face to face with it all, I was a trifle disappointed; but still the spell of the great city mastered me, and I became as devoted a Londoner as Charles Lamb. I always thought with pity—and just a little contempt—of my less fortunate fellow-townsmen, who were fated to live on in the humdrum round of Shillingbury

life. I did not in any way forget them; but, whenever I did call their existence back to memory, I always imagined them as taking the deepest interest in me and my doings. Often I longed to have some one or other of them with me for a day or so, in order that I might dazzle him or her with a glimpse of my success and of my knowledge of the world. Walter Tafnell was older than I was, and used to pose down at Shillingbury as a man who knew his way about; but I felt pretty confident that I could show him phases of life which would — metaphorically — make his hair stand on end; and I should have liked to take Jonas Harper, who was at that time organist, to a promenade concert. Poor Jonas had a streak of genius in that drink-muddled brain of his; and, if I could have kept him away from the refreshment-bar, the music would have fallen on no ears more appreciative than his. Miss Dalgairns I had always loved, in spite of her stern humour, and I would have sat out with her the longest May Meeting; and I would have searched London through with Mrs. Cutler Bridgeman in quest of the most advanced exponent of the Ritualistic school of the Anglican Church. But if I could have lured good old Simon Deverel, of Cobb Hall Farm, up to the Cattle Show, and have taken him for a walk some afternoon, when he had had enough of fat oxen and pigs, when the shops were ablaze with light and the streets thronged, I should have liked it better than all.

Thus it will be seen that I have not been oblivious of Shillingbury amid the roar and stress of London. As I lighted a cigar and tried to feel at ease in my inn, sitting on the hard, slippery, horsehair sofa, I began to meditate on my recent talk with the landlady, and the manner with which the few people, who still remembered my youth in Shillingbury, had received me when I had presented myself to their notice. Alas! there was but one conclusion to be reached — Shillingbury had troubled itself very little about me and my rise and progress.

As I sat looking at the landlady, while she received Mr. Joshua Gay's orders about some matter of business, fawning and smiling as if he had been a lord of the soil, I could not help regretting that I had not turned my steps elsewhere than in the direction of my birthplace. Yes, however distasteful it might be to confess it, there was no blinking the fact that I was, in the sight of Shillingbury, a mere nobody when com-

pared with the rascally cattle-dealer, whom I had more than once thrashed at school as a dirty little sneak.

Mr. Joshua, however, had got houses and land, and money in the bank; and, besides these, flocks and herds, which were now eating my poor friend Suttaby's hay and turnips at less cost, I feared, than these vegetables cost to produce. Mr. Gay had conquered, and had mounted a pedestal, and become an image for local worship and respect.

And this, too, in a corner of Arcadia the least transformed by the sinister forces of town life; one of those spots which are supposed to contain all the civic virtue yet left to us; to which the contemporary social reformers want to lead back the superfluous ones who persist in sticking to the pavement of Babylon. Doctrinaires of both sexes had preached to me so persistently the gospel, that a man who just keeps body and soul together by cultivating cabbages in the country, must be a higher, nobler being than the man who picks up a sufficient living by transporting cabbages in Covent Garden, that I had got to believe them, and to look upon London as the special home of fraud and duplicity. But the history of Mr. Joshua Gay's rise in the world had opened my eyes.

Rustic virtue, forsooth! another illusion gone. I was in a very sombre and, I fear, cynical mood as I turned my back that day on Shillingbury. I believe I even went so far as to compose a letter to my bankers, directing them at once to cease payment of all annual subscriptions to the charitable institutions of my birthplace. Shillingbury could, apparently, get on without me; therefore, she might buy her own blankets and her own soup in the winter, and provide herself with literary and scientific recreation at the Athenæum, an institution which my money had helped to found, and which still subsisted partially on my annual subscription. The recollection of this institution added fuel to the flame of my wrath, for this reason. The young men belonging to it were always mutually improving themselves—reading papers on the "National Drink Bill," "Emigration," "Bi-metallism," "England a Hundred Years Ago," and other such subjects, and indulging in a regular debate afterwards; but, though the secretary must have known that I was in the neighbourhood, he never deigned to ask me, a benefactor, and—though I say it myself—more of a citizen of the world than the average Shillingbury shop-boy, to read a paper, or even to be

present at a debate. I was kept fully aware of the society's existence by the receipt of the annual report, which, in addition to giving an account of the work done in the past year, would invariably call attention to certain extraordinary calls on the funds. One year the rain came in and broke down the ceiling; another saw the total collapse of the iron railings in front, put up originally by Mr. Grimes, ironmonger, a respected townsman, and brother-in-law of Mr. Joshua Gay; and the cocoa-nut matting seemed to be but as brown paper under the hobnails of the self-improvers. The committee came to me readily enough when they wanted money; but my services as a teacher they never enlisted. More than once, as I conscientiously thought over my duties to my birthplace, I had arranged the heads of a lecture to be delivered at the Athenæum; and here I was "severely let alone" by these know-nothings, who preferred to listen to each other's drivel, rather than to the ripe experience of one like myself!

But the mellowing influence of a good dinner and a night's rest, such as I seldom get in town, drew my spirits into a milder mood. The how, and the why, and the wherefore of the whole matter became clear to me as I smoked my after-breakfast pipe under the chestnut in my host's garden the next morning. In the chastened frame of mind induced by tobacco, I saw that, in turning up its nose at me and at my lecturing, Shillingbury was merely standing on its own dignity, and relying on its own resources. I, forsooth, had found Shillingbury a theatre not wide enough for my abilities, and had turned my back on the place which had been good enough for my forefathers, and had gone away to spend and be spent in the place which I was pleased to term the centre of civilisation. No doubt I thought myself a very fine fellow, and vastly condescending to offer to lecture to the mutually-improved young men on this subject and on that. Very likely I was right in my estimate. Shillingbury, however, had its own opinion on the matter, and had, moreover, plenty of young men who had been constant to their birthplace, and who were quite equal, after spending a week in company with an Encyclopædia, to the task of enlightening their brethren on any subject of current interest from the Athenæum platform.

Again, when I considered the fact that,

at the present moment in Shillingbury, Mr. Joshua Gay was somebody while I was nobody, I found that the good people down there had simply fallen under the spell of that power which compels us all nowadays—country mice and town mice as well—to hold to this and to abjure that: the power of the advertisement. They thought much of Mr. Gay and little of me, for the same reason which induces thousands of men every morning to wash their faces and secure their trousers with particular soaps and braces, the excellencies of which are brazened forth from every hoarding, in preference to other unknown and probably just as trustworthy wares; for the same reason which sends London playgoers in droves to admire the acting of any woman who has managed to get the world to talk about her as eminently beautiful or eminently pious, though she may move like a marionette and speak like a raven with a bad cold. The soap maker, and the braces maker, and the theatrical man of business, are past masters in the art of advertising. The virtues of their several specialties are kept steadily before the eyes of the British Public; and the British Public, though it may harden its heart for a time, always lays down its dollars in the end. Mr. Joshua Gay had been looming large before the eyes of Shillingbury for the last dozen years, while I had been sitting on a high stool in a London attorney's office. The good people down there had enjoyed constant sight of Mr. Gay's corpulent form and crimson countenance, and the sound of his rasping voice, and, what was more to the point, of the rattle of the money in his breeches-pockets as he swaggered round the marketplace and out and in the "Black Bull;" but I was far removed from their eyesight, and the scratching of my pen in Roggs's Buildings was inaudible to their sense of hearing. They were even unaffected by an article of mine which appeared in the "Reviver," a publication which expired after giving seventeen numbers to the world, and by my elegant verses in the columns of a society paper, the name of which I refrain from giving. "The absent are always in the wrong," says the French proverb. "Out of sight, out of mind," is our own enunciation of a truth, the full force of which I had never so completely realised as when I pondered over the experiences of my last visit to my birthplace.

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